

She Said/She Said Podcast With Laura Cox Kaplan

Episode 271

Guest: Carrie Peeples, master home organizer and CEO of Neat Smart

Episode Title: Your closet, your pantry and your emotional attachments! Decluttering tips just in time for the holidays!

She said/she said podcast with Laura Cox Kaplan

Episode 271: Decluttering strategies to make life and the holidays less stressful

Guest: Carrie Peeples, master home organizer and CEO Neat Smart

SHOW OPEN

Laura Cox Kaplan ([00:07](#)):

Hey, friend, welcome to She Said/ She Said Podcast, a top rated global career and personal development podcast with a unique focus on helping you create more influence in your life. My name is Laura Cox Kaplan. I've spent my entire career thinking about influence, and I've seen firsthand the impact that effectively mastering and really using influence can have. I created this podcast to help us dig deeper into the different dimensions that help us build and sustain influence. And each week I'm drawing on this incredible community of women to help us do just that. It's important to remember, though, that creating more influence for yourself is actually a skill. It requires investments of time and energy, including listening to podcasts like this one, but those efforts can pay big dividends toward successful outcomes. Whether you are navigating a career or life pivot, maybe starting a business or raising money for a special cause, or running your household, or just trying to connect with folks who don't share your views, understanding and using the different dimensions of influence will not only increase your chances of success, but will leave you happier and more fulfilled and better positioned to have the impact that you hope to have.

Laura Cox Kaplan ([01:38](#)):

I am really delighted to have you here, and I look forward to hearing your thoughts and feedback and how you think about influence in your life.

EPISODE 271 INTRODUCTION:

Laura Cox Kaplan ([01:50](#)):

Hey, friend, welcome to episode 271. As we start making plans for the holidays, we're thinking about how the holidays represent a time that is not only joyous, but also a time when we can easily get overwhelmed, balancing all the things, the kids' activities and the parties and the outfits needed for those parties and the decorations and the travel to see family and the gifts and the stuff that we inevitably forget to put on the master list, and then ultimately run around at the last minute trying to track something down that is, by that point, impossible to find. Maybe I'm just speaking for myself, but I doubt it, and just all the things, right? But here is what I've learned. Planning ahead is the secret to success, but it also requires that we make some pretty big time investments in thinking through how to organize and really plan in advance.

Laura Cox Kaplan ([02:51](#)):

For example, have you ever done your shopping well in advance only to find that you either forgot what you bought or maybe worse where you hid it? I am embarrassed to say that this has happened to me more times than I can count, and that on more than one occasion I've given holiday gifts. Actually, at

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Valentine's Day, don't tell anyone because that's when I discovered them. Organization is kind of a mixed bag for me, and I find that I'm super organized in some areas like this podcast and my business. All the things that make up, She Said, She Said Media, but I find that my household organization tends to be more challenging for me. The reason why that matters is because when I don't get that right, it tends to create so much chaos in all the other aspects of my life. I feel like the holidays really do send all of that into overdrive or have the potential to.

Laura Cox Kaplan ([03:48](#)):

So as I'm starting to think about the holidays and suspect that you are too, I wanted to share a fabulously talented master organizer to give us some suggestions. Carrie Peoples is the founder of Georgia, based neat, smart. She also happens to be the sister of the terrifically talented Laura Camacho of the SpeakUp with Laura podcast who joined us here on She Said, she said podcast, and I actually joined her on her podcast as well. Carrie is incredibly talented in her own right at must run in the family. You can find and follow Carrie on Instagram. You'll find her at neats smart N-E-A-T-S-M-A-R-T, and I urge you to do so because she shares not only incredibly useful and thoughtful tips on home organization, but also products that can make that job a whole lot easier. Now, you may be asking yourself, what does home organization have to do with influence and career?

Laura Cox Kaplan ([04:50](#)):

I'm glad you asked <laugh>. When we think about this topic of influence, a big part of that is investing in ourselves and investing in ourselves in ways that actually helps us create the conditions where we can thrive and succeed. Spending the time really investing the time in proactively thinking about how to make our lives less chaotic can be a really important part of building and maintaining that influence. But as I think about what Carrie does, there is also a really important element of story and how the stories that we tell ourselves can impact our influence because it impacts our mindset and how we see and approach challenges. Stories also impact the way that we think about our stuff and the identities that we adopt related to our stuff stuff. I'm sure you probably have some special item or garment or pair of shoes or earrings that you have no intention of wearing, but that you still hold onto them because they evoke that memory and maybe some part of a previous identity that's still important to you.

Laura Cox Kaplan ([06:02](#)):

Carrie and I talk about all of this as well as her home organizing philosophy, and she shares some great tips for organizing our holidays, including a tip that I'm pretty sure is going to change my life forever. She shares these tips so that you can get your holidays kicked off on the best footing and really enjoy those celebrations while also helping to avoid the overwhelm that can come from disorganized chaos. Carrie also shares her career story and how and why she built neat, smart, and her big career pivot from corporate exec to entrepreneur. Here friend is episode 271 with Neats Smart CEO and founder, master organizer, Carrie Peoples. Carrie, welcome to She Said, she said,

Carrie Peeples ([06:54](#)):

Oh, thank you so much. I'm delighted to be here.

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Laura Cox Kaplan ([06:57](#)):

Well, I am delighted to have you. I am a big fan. I follow you actively on Instagram. I love your tips. I would love, though, for us to start the conversation by having you tell us a little bit about your business. What is Neat Smartt and how did you get started?

Carrie Peeples ([07:15](#)):

Okay, so Neat Smartt is a home professional organizing business that I started in 2012, and I go into people's houses. I mean, I think people are more familiar with the home organization, business and industry. However, when I started, I got a lot of cocked heads, and it wasn't something that everyone was familiar with, but I had always had this idea of if there's anything that I could do, you know, as a job, as a career, I would love to go in and help people organize. I think it must go back to my childhood in playing in my grandmother's closet and organizing her makeup. But it's just, it's just something that's, I've always enjoyed. I studied drawing and painting in college, and, but I was afraid, I think, of saying that that's going to be my career. I thought, well, I'll never make any money doing that.

Carrie Peeples ([08:12](#)):

I, I didn't have the confidence in myself to to pursue that. So I ended up in technology. I also worked in the luxury industry, and I was always really good at teaching people. So I would take, at the time what were complex concepts, such as entering data into an application and teaching people how to use email, because that was starting way back in the, in the mid nineties when I started that, and I was able to communicate that and teach people and make it entertaining, and I just, I always loved sharing information with people. So at my last corporate job, I worked for a technology company. It was a startup that I thoroughly enjoyed as a startup because I got to wear lots of hats, which I think is why I steered myself towards the entrepreneurial route. But as it grew and grew, I, I felt like I was kind of losing my importance or I, I, it's funny, my job became much more focused, and I enjoyed the variety of, again, having to wear a lot of hats. Yeah. But I was primarily in the role of design and implementation of software solutions that were customized to heavily regulated industries. So I worked with hospitals and health insurance and these types of organizations, organizations in keeping their compliance systems organized and ready for reviews. So

Laura Cox Kaplan ([09:52](#)):

Interesting.

Carrie Peeples ([09:53](#)):

I'm, I'm realizing it's like all these things that I've done along the way, were all about preparing me for this role, and I think we can take all of our experiences and make them applicable and make them useful. It's just recognizing that, you know, that maybe that wasn't wasted time at that job or that career.

Laura Cox Kaplan ([10:14](#)):

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I love that. So let's, let's dig into that a little bit more, and I'd love for you to share maybe at what moment you realized, because sort of looking back Mm-Hmm, <affirmative>, the pieces all fit together, right? And this is what we often find in these conversations when we're talking about career pivots. You look back and you're like, oh, okay, well, all these things were like building blocks that built on each other, but at the moment in which you face, okay, it is time to leave this job, and you may or may not have, I mean, maybe you knew that this was the kind of business that you were gonna build, but maybe talk us through sort of that moment and how you knew that this was the business for you.

Carrie Peeples ([10:55](#)):

So it was very easy in some ways because I was growing increasingly unhappy with the work. I was platinum with Delta, and it was, I did not enjoy that anymore. I was flying all the time. I was traveling all the time, but traveling for business is not the same as traveling for fun, right? <Laugh>,

Laura Cox Kaplan ([11:19](#)):

And

Carrie Peeples ([11:19](#)):

I had asked for more money, and they said, oh, can't do that. It's not in our budget. I asked for fewer responsibilities. I said, Nope, can't do that. And I just thought, you know what? I don't feel like I'm really being valued here. In hindsight, I know that I was, but they were going through an acquisition,

Carrie Peeples ([11:37](#)):

And it, they were in a quiet period when they couldn't talk about certain things and, you know, finances. They couldn't guarantee that. So it kind of made me laugh. I, again, I, I did that experiment of if I could do anything all day, every day, what would it be? And it was organizing and I did some research and it's like, oh, wow, this is a legit business. And so again, this was probably 2011, two, yeah, 2011, I made up my mind to leave. I turned in my notice in January and then shortly thereafter, they announced that the company had been acquired. And I thought, okay, this is, this is excellent timing, actually. But I had to stay on and hire my replacements as in plural and train them. And I left in May finally, and then started the business officially. But I, I, I had done some research and done some you know, education of, you know, what is this industry? What is it all about? I had zero experience with starting a business, however, but that started the adventure.

Laura Cox Kaplan ([12:48](#)):

What were some of the biggest challenges to actually starting the business? I'm curious how you actually, you know, sort of what the first couple things were that you did when you said, okay, I think it's this organizing business. Where's my niche? Sort of how you figure that out, how you sort of, what, what, what were the first pieces that you put in place?

Carrie Peeples ([13:07](#)):

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So there was a national association of professional organizers that I joined, and that certainly helped. I mean, they had an annual conference that I decided to go to even before I left my job. So that helped to, to give me the confidence to say, okay, again, this, there is legitimacy, legitimacy here. And I also became aware of how large this industry really is and how varied it is. You know, we think about organizing as, oh, you know, someone's gonna come in and make my pantry look great or my closet, but there's a whole range of organizing. There's financial organizing, there's organizing to help people downsize and move into assisted living facilities. There's organizing for just paperwork. There's, or I mean, there's just, there's this whole range and you don't have to be an expert in all of it. You can, you can try all of it.

Carrie Peeples ([14:04](#)):

So, joining that organization allowed me to meet other organizers. And so I worked with some of them to learn about how they did their business, how they ran theirs, who they worked with, and then that I honestly organized anybody. So just to get some experience and see what it is that I really liked. And I think a lot of times in entrepreneurial aspects, we think we want to do one thing and we actually end up being better at others. I just think we all have to try different types of work or maybe different environments, but working for a few other people certainly helped. And also realizing what I was good at and what I was not good at. You know, things that I, I think a lot of people would say, oh, don't wanna organize a garage or a basement. It's not my favorite, but there's actually something very enjoyable about a garage because it's not emotional. Helping people go through possessions that have been passed down from deceased parents or other family members, that can be really challenging. I sure enjoy developing the relationship with the client, but it is hard because people are attached to things and you're helping them through a grieving process. So that's something that I didn't expect to come across again. I was thinking, oh, I'll just, you know, make pretty closets and there's, there's so much more to this business than I realized. And it's a fascinating, always changing business.

Laura Cox Kaplan ([15:37](#)):

Yeah, absolutely. Carrie, let's talk a little bit about your philosophy behind organization. You're sort of touching on elements of this that I think we don't always think about when we jump in to tackle a project. We like that. Mm-Hmm. <Affirmative>, we know it's gonna be hard, but we don't always, you know, really think through the reasons why it's hard that identity and grief and all these big emotions can be tied to it. But maybe give us some perspective on how you like to approach projects and also your particular area of expertise if you have one, or the areas that you especially like to tackle.

Carrie Peeples ([16:13](#)):

Well, it's funny you, those two words you used emotion and identity are huge. And that's, that's a key part of figuring out what, what is organization to you? Mm-Hmm. <Affirmative>. So I could come to your house and you say, oh, you know, organize my pantry. And it's like, well, what does that, what does that mean to you? And right, every, so my philosophy is everybody has, you know, everybody can be organized if they want to, but also you have to, I have to create a solution that works for you. How, how many people are in your house? Do you cook? Does your family consume snacks? How old are your

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kids? Do you want them to have access to the food? Do you have special dietary requirements? There's food? Does that need to be kept separate from somebody else's food?

Carrie Peeples ([17:06](#)):

There's, there's a whole list of, of I guess, kind of interview questions that I go through with people, but it's, my philosophy is everybody can do it. It's also figuring out what is it going to be easy for you to maintain. Mm-Hmm. Do you have staff that comes into your house? If, if you're never, are you the kind of person that would take the five pound bag of flour and put it into a jar because you want that to look nice? If you're not that person, then that I'm not gonna design, I'm not gonna put that in a solution for you. If your kids are never, you know, never going to put the food back in the pantry, then, you know, it's, it's going to be harder to have a solution there. But it's also about figuring out what works for you. How do you function?

Carrie Peeples ([17:54](#)):

Some people, I remember I've worked with a client one time and she opened the cabinet door, this is early under the sink, and she said, look at this. Just look how crazy this is. And I really didn't think it looked that bad, and I, but to her it was, it was complete chaos. I was like, there's probably 10 things under the sink here, just, it could be done differently. But it's funny, we all have different ideas of what is organized. So I always try to make that part of my interview process with a client. I ask them, "Tell me what organized looks like to you." Is it all of the soup can labels lined up and facing the same direction? Or is it just having a space in the pantry that's where your, your canned goods go? So it's, it's really tweaking and figuring out, you know, what is going to work for you? What can you maintain? Because if there's a system that you can't achieve, that you can't maintain, then that's not the system for you.

Laura Cox Kaplan ([18:53](#)):

Yeah. Yeah. Carrie, let's talk a little bit more about the emotion here and specifically this idea of shame.

Carrie Peeples ([19:01](#)):

So probably one of the, the first conversations I have with clients is they'll, they'll bring me into their home and we're walking through the space, or even as they open the front door and they say, I'm so ashamed. I, I feel like I should be able to do this. I'm embarrassed. I, and, and it's, it's heartbreaking to me because there's so much shame associated with not being organized. We have such this perfection culture that, and I, again, I'll say women 'cause that's who I work with primarily. They think they need to do it all, be it all, have it all. And not everybody is organized. I mean, everybody's organized about something and everybody is disorganized about something. But you can't have it all be it all, do it all, and it's okay to get help. I don't know, so many women feel so much shame over not being organized or not being able to quote, figure out the system, and they're embarrassed to ask for help. Yeah. And it makes me sad, but it also makes me happy that I can help them. My first step is to always reassure them that, Hey, whatever your home looks like, I have seen worse. And you can do this and you can do it with my help. Yeah. And we're gonna get you there.

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Laura Cox Kaplan ([20:21](#)):

I think too-- attached to that-- is this concept of vulnerability and being willing to be vulnerable and even sort of acknowledging that shame in the first place is probably the first step, because you really are sort of opening yourself up to that level of vulnerability that's really, really hard.

Carrie Peeples ([20:39](#)):

Oh, it is. I mean, we're talking about literal dirty laundry, right? <Laugh>, and you're opening yourself up to let somebody who they think is going to judge them and who is not going to judge. I mean that, again, I say it, but it's not until I say it to their faces, you know, I'm not judging you. I, there's no, there's, again, there's nothing you can show me that I probably, that I haven't seen. And it's okay, you're not a bad person because your closet is disorganized, or because your pantry is dis or because maybe your whole house is disorganized. That's just not your skillset. And that's okay, because that's my skillset. Mm-Hmm. <Affirmative>. And that's what I can bring to you. And I, I mean, I just love being able to share that with people because it's something that I enjoy doing. It doesn't feel like work to me. Mm-Hmm.

Laura Cox Kaplan ([21:26](#)):

<Affirmative>

Carrie Peeples ([21:26](#)):

And something that's, that you're finding so debilitating and suffocating. I can help you with that. And, and it's okay to get help with whatever it is that you need. It's okay to get help with it.

Laura Cox Kaplan ([21:41](#)):

Yeah. I love that. Absolutely. Love that. You mentioned also developing systems that are cognizant of the fact that you maybe have other people in your house. Mm-Hmm. If you have children, if you have people that work for you or with you who also will be using pantry items and Mm-Hmm. Sharing that space. Maybe a couple of tips on how to think about that, because at least speaking for myself, you know, and I'm not super organized in every aspect of my life. I think certain aspects are more organized than others, but I find that household organization is harder just because there are more people involved. And it's not that I'm more organized or less organized than anybody else in the house. Although I guess one could argue this that's a topic for another day in another group, but maybe suggestions for how to think about that, because I do think it's really hard. I mean, do you do trainings with maybe an entire family or what does that look like so that you get everybody on the same page?

Carrie Peeples ([22:49](#)):

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Well, again, in that interview process is figuring out, you know, who all's gonna be involved here. Mm-Hmm. <Affirmative>. And it's always interesting to me. It's, it's the, the disinterested third party, which is me. People tend to listen to more than mom saying it or dad saying it. But you know, part of my finishing process is to give, and, and typically it's going to be the mom hiring me. You know, I will give her the tour of, say, this is where we put, again, I'm just using a pantry as an example. Mm-Hmm. <Affirmative>. This is, you know, the reason why we put the chips here is because your kids can reach them. And it's labeled kids' snacks. We've got, you know, adult snacks over here, maybe the dark chocolate or that gets separated, but I give them a tour of where everything is and why.

Carrie Peeples ([23:34](#)):

And even if it's in their own closet, this is why we set this up this way. And it's always a constant questioning. Like, does this work for you? Is this something you think your family will be able to maintain? Most of the time the children aren't at home, so I don't walk them through it. So it, it really goes through the parents to be, you know, checked off. But it's most of the time when people are calling on me, they're, they want a change. So it's not like, Hey, I can come organize your house. It's, no, no, we need this. So they are much more open to, to having a process, to having a change. Mm-Hmm. <Affirmative> we talk through aesthetics, you know, do you want to see things or do you wanna have things hidden? Do you want to have baskets with labels, or do you just want things lined up on your, on the, on the shelf there?

Carrie Peeples ([24:27](#)):

So it's really about creating a custom solution, but also just taking into account everybody that's there and still walking them through. I, you know, it's 100% obvious to me what the system is, but it may not be for that person. And of course, you know, showing them where everything is, and then I also follow up with them a few weeks later, but just to make sure everything is working as planned. And 99.9% of the time it is, it's just people, A lot of people are open to being organized. They want to be organized. They don't know how to create the system to keep them that way. Right. So that's why they bring me in. But being open to it. So here's a red flag. If someone says, Ugh, I would love for you to come in and organize my, my husband's office for him, it's like, ugh.

Carrie Peeples ([25:17](#)):

That's great. Is he also on board with this <laugh>? Because I am not a marriage counselor. <Laugh> <laugh>, but you have to be open to change. It's just like, if you wanted to say, if you said, oh, I, I really wanna get in shape, but you're not really willing to change your diet or add exercise, that's, that's gonna be a little bit more of a challenge. But when you say, look, I need to make changes. I wanna be healthier, you've already made that first step. So I always, I tell people all the time, getting organized is a lot like getting in shape, whatever that means to you, because it's say, I'm going to make some changes so that my life, my home can be better.

Laura Cox Kaplan ([25:59](#)):

Yeah. Yeah. Absolutely. You know, as I, as I think about this and, and, you know, little things I do, you know, engage in little practices with pretty great consistency because as it relates to organization and my workspace in particular, because it helps me clear my head, it helps me think more clearly and maintain that focus. Maybe talk a little bit about some of the transformations that you've seen, or any stories that you're comfortable sharing? No, no names or no, no attribution, but maybe some, you know, some things that you've seen in terms of people really changing their lives with more focus on this, some, some easy stuff that you can do.

Carrie Peeples ([26:40](#)):

Yeah. You mentioned James Clear's book: "atomic habits.: It's the little things, and that's what I always try to tell people is you make little changes, they gradually will, will manifest in larger transformations. I mean, not just change, but it's, and I also say everybody's organized about something and everybody is disorganized about something. So many people feel like, oh, I just wasn't born with that gene. I, I, I'm just not an organized person. And then they get that system. And this has happened several times, like, oh, excuse me, I don't know how to do this. I was never taught that. And then I teach them, Hey, this is why we're going to store your shirts, you know, hang them in your closet, you know, facing this direction and in this order. And it's like, oh, I never knew that I can do that.

Carrie Peeples ([27:35](#)):

So just getting that reassurance from them of that's, that's new information for me. Or I, I understand now I can, I can maintain that. And I, you know, I, I don't have a specific story, but I can tell you there're several people that feel more confident because they didn't know that they could do this. They had never, they've never tried, or they had never been taught. And I've had several clients tell me, I feel so much better when I get up in the morning because I don't have this mountain of clo, you know, clothes that I don't know how to figure out if I should keep or not. I don't have that mountain in my bedroom anymore. I feel so much more relaxed at the end of the day because I don't have these piles on my kitchen counter anymore. I'm communicating better with my spouse because we're not arguing about this, these boxes that have been sitting in the living room for weeks and weeks and weeks.

Carrie Peeples ([28:32](#)):

<Laugh>, I, it's disorganization is so detrimental to us as individuals, but also as families and, and in marriages, it, it can really be a, a point of contention. But who has time? That's the problem. Nobody has the time to sit down and go, okay, let's go through this. Or, and I can tell you, it can be something that people, they not just argue about, but they use as a weapon against their spouse because they are angry at them for something. So they, you know, it's a very typical passive aggressive, they'll leave the things in the, you know, in the living room or on the counter, and it's like, well, I'll, I'll deal with it later because I'm too busy. I'm too busy taking care of the kids. He should have time to do it. I mean, there's, there's all kinds of marital issues that can come up with it too.

Carrie Peeples ([29:23](#)):

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And I, I feel like people need to understand that it's not some magic trait that you're born with. It's a skill that you learned. It's a skill. Yeah. And I love teaching that to people and saying, I, you know, you don't have to keep that. You don't have to keep things that no longer, I mean, we can use Marie Kondo. They don't spark joy. It's not useful. It's not beautiful. Giving people permission to let go of things is a huge part of what I teach them as well. Not just the system, but giving them permission to pass things on.

Laura Cox Kaplan ([29:58](#)):

Yeah. I love that. I absolutely love that. You, you talk about you know, the time involved in all of this, and I'm thinking about the upcoming holidays. We're about to embark on Thanksgiving, and then, you know, the other holidays, Hanukkah and Christmas and all those sorts of things. I'd love to get your thoughts on maybe some tips and suggestions that you have for making it all a bit less chaotic on the backend by making some investments on the front end. And I know you have a wonderful product on your website that we will link to. But maybe if you could give us sort of a sneak peek into a couple of tips that can be really helpful as it relates to holiday organization in particular.

Carrie Peeples ([30:43](#)):

Well, it's, it's interesting. I've, I've done this survey many times with clients and people that follow me on Instagram and, and people that read, read my newsletter, like, what is the most stressful time of the year? And it is the holiday season, you know, basically now till the end of December. But it's also the most fun. Like, they love it. They, they, and I think we all enjoy it. We, but there's just so much going on. If you have kids at home or whether you don't have kids at home, there's parties, there's holidays, there's birthdays, there's, there's all this other life that happens as well. So I think as early as you can sit down, look at your calendar, what do you have going on? You know, do you have work trips? Do you have what's going on with your regular life? And then we've gotta add the holidays in there.

Carrie Peeples ([31:38](#)):

So I really like, that's why I created Holiday Smart, was to have a list of things that you need to do. But even if you just pull out your calendar and just start looking at, okay, you know, as we are recording this, Thanksgiving is two weeks away. I, I'm not sure when it will be right broadcast, but, you know, time is ticking. I can't believe we're this far through the year anyway. But you've got to sit down and make a list of, you know, are there events that you're going to make sure they're on your calendar? Who is involved with those events? Do you have the clothes for that event? Are you cooking for that event? Just to take the time to sit down. And I, I'm a visual person. I think studying art taught me that. But I, so I like to see things on a calendar.

Carrie Peeples ([32:21](#)):

I like to see the list, but also if you actually physically write the, the, the to-dos or the things that you need to think about, if you write it down, that helps to solidify it in your brain so that you can start solving that problem of, well, how are we gonna get the Turkey over here? Or, you know, what all needs to happen in the right timeframe. I think so many times we're just busy and the information is swirling in our heads and it's not going anywhere. You've gotta get it outta your brain. Mm-Hmm. And onto a piece

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Episode Title: Your closet, your pantry and your emotional attachments! Decluttering tips just in time for the holidays!

of paper, then you can start to solve that problem. So it's not very complicated. It's not very, very sophisticated, but a piece of paper and a pen can work wonders. And I think we can all take, you know, in five minutes, I think we all underestimate how powerful five minutes can be.

Carrie Peeples ([33:12](#)):

Going back to the atomic habits. If you can sit down for five minutes and focus on, okay, what do I have going on this week? What do we have going on this month looking into the next month? Just five minutes can accomplish so much if you focus uninterrupted to think, what is it I need to get done? And then you can start to figure out the solution to that, which is, okay, you know, this has to happen. You know, put, let me put the order here. Maybe some priorities. But if you don't ever sit down and start to focus on it, you're never gonna, it's gonna constantly be swirling in your head. You're never going to get to that solution.

Laura Cox Kaplan ([33:49](#)):

Yeah. And that swirling in your head is the worst part because it's the part that really creates such a drag on your focus, or at least it does for me. And I suspect

Carrie Peeples ([33:59](#)):

Oh, and you feel it in your stomach. You're like, oh my gosh, totally. I have to do this. I don't know. You know, what am I supposed to do? What all, and, and I think also that everybody talks about fomo. There's also this major fear of forgetting.

Laura Cox Kaplan ([34:10](#)):

Absolutely. What if

Carrie Peeples ([34:11](#)):

I forget this? What if I don't

Laura Cox Kaplan ([34:14](#)):

Let someone down? Yeah. <Laugh>

Carrie Peeples ([34:15](#)):

Sit down. Oh, I mean, that's, that's the worst. Yeah. And you know, I think of things at random times and I don't have a piece of paper on me, so I'll use my notes app on my phone. That's a quick way, but there still is nothing better than physically, you know, writing it out, because that, oh, the, the physical act of writing helps to solidify that in your brain.

Laura Cox Kaplan ([34:38](#)):

Yeah. Yeah. Absolutely. Absolutely. I just lost your picture for a minute, but you're back. <Laugh>. Yeah.

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Carrie Peeples ([34:45](#)):

I had a battery notification pop up.

Laura Cox Kaplan ([34:47](#)):

Okay. Okay. You shared some great tips on your Instagram recently about kitchen spices. Mm-Hmm. <Affirmative> and baking baking materials, all those sorts of things. I would love for you to share that in particular, because I know a lot of folks listening, she may be organizing, you know, things to cook or organizing these various holiday celebrations that involve cooking and baking and all those sorts of things. Not everybody's a baker. I'm really not. But I do have to prepare things and have the, you know, the seam set so that it works. Maybe share those tips. Carrie, for spices and baking organization in particular. Mm-Hmm. <Affirmative>.

Carrie Peeples ([35:33](#)):

Well, here's the thing. Whether you cook or you bake, you do it this time of year. <Laugh> <laugh>, I mean, most people are, are cooking something or baking something, even if they're not regular chefs or bakers. But I say this for all of my organizing projects: know what you have. So go through and assess, you know, whether you have a spice rack or maybe you have a spice shelf or you have a lazy Susan, but assess what you have. And I look at those expiration dates and, you know, a lot of times we're making special things around the holidays that use maybe certain herbs or spices that we don't normally use. So we may have pretty old stuff. So take a look at the containers and look at your expiration dates, and also look at your inventory. Do we need more of this particular spice or, and again, I go back to my list making.

Carrie Peeples ([36:27](#)):

If you're going to be, if you're gonna be, you know, ginger snap cookies, you've got to check, do we have the allspice? Do we have the ginger? I never use allspice, so I dunno if I have enough from last year, or do I need to to get more? But assess what you have, make sure that they're, all of them are current. And then I always alphabetize spices because that's the easiest way to remember where something goes. It's an easy system. Everybody knows how to alphabetize so we can all put things back in order, fingers crossed. And same thing with baking supplies

Laura Cox Kaplan ([37:02](#)):

Like flowers that never, that has never occurred to me. Carrie <laugh> <laugh>. I have, I have never, I have never considered. That is such a brilliant suggestion. And I, I have to say, I've never considered that ever until you just said that. Yay. Yay. I, I

Carrie Peeples ([37:17](#)):

Just shared something <laugh>. So yes, it goes all spice to basil. I think I sh I think I,

Laura Cox Kaplan ([37:24](#)):

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Or yeah, I think I organized spices based on sort of the type of food that you make with them. So if it's sort of, you know, spicy Mexican or curry or, you know, and I sort of put those things in sort of maybe savory or spicy versus ones that you would bake with. I think I sort of segregate them that way. But truly, I think you may have changed my life just now, <laugh> well's, the idea, idea of organizing alphabetically.

Carrie Peeples ([37:53](#)):

That's so funny. I mean, it, it, it's funny. I, you're not the first person who's done that. And you know what, if that works for you, do it. Don't, don't switch it on my account. But I think it's easier to have it alphabetized because I know exactly that basil is next to, you know, cayenne and allspice. So that makes sense for me. But if, if it works for you to have them grouped together by that, the problem is with that, I would see that you might have some crossover. Like coriander is going to be in Mexican food and in Thai food.

Laura Cox Kaplan ([38:25](#)):

Absolutely. So

Carrie Peeples ([38:26](#)):

You're, you might end up with duplicates of coriander. So then if you have duplicates of things, I think that gets to be so overwhelming, because that's what I mean when you're taking your inventory. I worked with a client one time and I think she must have bought everything but the bagel seasoning every time she went to Trader Joe's. 'cause She probably had 10 bottles of it, <laugh>. And I think it was that I'm at the store, I don't know if I have it or not. I better go ahead and buy it. Absolutely. So <laugh>, we organized a, a, a large back stock of that for you, but for her, excuse me. So I think it's, again, knowing what you have and having a place for it, I, I like the alphabet alphabetical method. And even on a lazy Susan, you can do it.

Carrie Peeples ([39:11](#)):

But there's nothing worse than going to cook or bake something, and you don't have the right ingredients. So check your inventory now before you, you're actually going to bake or cook these things and you'll be so glad to have done that ahead of time. I, you know, same thing with flour, sugar nuts. And, you know, anything that you're using in the kitchen that you're probably will be using a lot more of as well. You wanna make sure that you are fully stocked so that you don't have to stop in the middle and add to that anxiety, frustration, anger. 'cause That's what takes away from the holiday. Suddenly, you know, baking a pumpkin pie isn't fun. When you've gotta stop in the middle and go out and get allspice, then you start to dread baking and then, but your family probably loves it. So it's, it just be, it's just creating stress that doesn't need to be there. There's so much else going on in the world. You can control your kitchen, you can, you can get this organized so that that is enjoyable and pleasurable.

Laura Cox Kaplan ([40:14](#)):

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Yeah. And it occurs to me, you waste so much more time when that happens. Yes. When you forget, you don't have an ingredient, you have to run back to the store. You've then wasted time that you could have been putting toward whatever the completion of that project is.

Carrie Peeples ([40:28](#)):

And your family wants, the family wants the happiest version of you, right. As you do as well. Mm-Hmm. <Affirmative>. So let's just do a couple of little things now so that we can, again, bad things are still gonna happen. They're still gonna be stress, but let's just take a little bit of that control so that we are setting the stage for good experiences and good memories.

Laura Cox Kaplan ([40:50](#)):

Yeah. Yeah. Let's pivot just a bit to the closet, because I think it's probably the other area that people really have, have, have trouble with. I'll say I'm speaking for a friend, but I'm really speaking for myself. <Laugh> a little trouble with my closet, maybe a lot of trouble with my closet. I, you know, have an attachment to so many things that have given me joy at some point, including things that I have long since passed wearing. I'm probably never gonna wear those things again. Will my daughter love them as much as I did at some point? Maybe, maybe not. Mm-Hmm, <affirmative>. But maybe some advice for coming to terms with these precious wonderful things that maybe I have a few too many of.

Carrie Peeples ([41:36](#)):

Well, I think your closet is a big part of identity, and this is something that a lot of people struggle with, myself included at one point, because I went from wearing suits and heels to wearing leggings and sweatshirts and

Laura Cox Kaplan ([41:52](#)):

Bingo

Carrie Peeples ([41:53](#)):

<Laugh>, it's, it's hard to let go. Wow, I had this giant salary and I wore these clothes and I was important. And you're still important no matter what you're wearing. But it is something that, and and I don't know if this affects men as much. I, I've just helped more women with it, but it's really coming to terms with, okay, who are you today? What is your identity today? The suit that you wore 10 years ago? It probably isn't fashionable. B may not fit. And c, if you go back into corporate and you need a suit, treat yourself to a new suit. Right? It's, I know there are special, one of a kind pieces that, you know, I'm not gonna say I give you permission, but sure. Keep those, keep things, keep a few things for your daughter, keep a few things maybe as, as good memories, but maybe store that in a container on a shelf as opposed to taking up valuable clothing space, real estate.

Carrie Peeples ([42:50](#)):

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So if you have the space for it, keep it. But also realize when, when fashion comes back around, there's always a twist. So it's not gonna look the same 20, 10 years later, 20 years later, your body's not the same later. Do you really wanna hang on to something that may not look as great on you or just doesn't suit who you are today? You know, I mean, closets are a big thing. It's, it's very, we're we're very emotionally attached to clothing and we assign meaning to it. But you have to recognize that it is just a piece of clothing. If you imagine you know, if your house burned down and those clothes were destroyed, you would be sad, but not, you wouldn't replace it.

Laura Cox Kaplan ([43:40](#)):

Yeah.

Carrie Peeples ([43:40](#)):

So it's, it's the, it's what's going on in our head. And I think talking to yourself and realizing and, and assessing why am I so attached to this? Is it because I felt like I was important when I was working in corporate? Or, or when that, that seemed like a happier time, then maybe why are you hanging onto that? You're having happier times now. I mean, there's, there's just mm-Hmm, <affirmative> there's a lot of therapy that can go into figuring out why is that so important today versus it taking, is it what you want to sacrifice other space for? If you let that go, you open up that physical space and that mental space to bring in happy new experiences that might have, you know, new memories associated with them. Yeah. So there's this tension between holding onto the past or creating opportunities for new experiences in the future.

Carrie Peeples ([44:41](#)):

You can always take a picture of it and keep the picture and throw the item away. I know that's, some people say, oh, that's wonderful, and that helps so many people. Interesting. I personally don't know if that would help, but it does. So everybody looks at things a little bit differently. And also look at, you know, if you're passing on your suits, there's probably an organization that could use those for women who are just now getting into the workforce or maybe reentering the workforce who don't have the money to, to buy new suits. So thinking about how it can take on a new life, I think that also helps people with parting with maybe something they spend a lot of money on or something that no longer suits their lifestyle and who they are today.

Laura Cox Kaplan ([45:25](#)):

Yeah. I love, I love that, that's such great perspective and such a smart way to, to think about all this. Carrie, let's pivot quickly before I let you go and talk a bit more about, you know, as you built your business and as you think about your brand communicating both to your customer and to your perspective customer, you do an amazing job on Instagram. If folks don't follow Carrie, you'll find her at neat smart N-E-A-T-S-M-A-R-T, and she shares great tips every single week, and it's very authentic and very direct. But maybe, Carrie, talk a little bit about how you learned to embrace social media. You are relatively my age. This is not something that we grew up with. So how did you learn to embrace that and sort of figure out how to use the product in a way that helps you connect to your prospective customer?

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Carrie Peeples ([46:16](#)):

Well, first of all, thank you very much, but a lot of it has been trial and error. And what's interesting, when I started this business, Instagram was kind, well, it was starting out and it was a place that you would go and like, I used Instagram initially just to use the filters. I didn't realize it was like a platform to post pictures on. I was like, oh, I can just use this cool filter. But Instagram is new. My clients were not on Instagram, they were primarily on Facebook. So there were a lot of, you know, specific Facebook groups, like moms groups that were very helpful for me in utilizing social media. So out of necessity would do posts on Facebook to say, Hey, you know, here's, here's this product that I have. I did create a business Facebook page, but I could see immediate need for it. Instagram was more of a, well, I'll try this out and see what happens. And certainly my use of Instagram has changed now that we're doing videos and we're doing short videos and we're doing, you know, things that are so quick, quick and trying to catch, capture attention.

Laura Cox Kaplan ([47:27](#)):

Right.

Carrie Peeples ([47:28](#)):

A lot of it, the fact that I enjoy consuming Instagram, it's entertaining to me. It's a creative outlet. So that I, I think out of necessity, I have learned more about it, but it is, it is not intuitive necessarily, but I think when you recognize how you can reach people, and I think, you know, a word that you just used was, resonates so much with me. Authenticity. I, I, I believe in communicating clearly to people and, and letting, giving them information that they can use. I love it when people say, oh my gosh, that tip that you gave about X, Y, Z that was so helpful. That made a big difference to me because so many times it is just the little things that, that do inspire us and that do, you know, allow us to make changes. So I follow a lot of other people and then get good advice from them.

Carrie Peeples ([48:20](#)):

Mm-Hmm, <affirmative> on Instagram Facebook, I'm not as active with actually. 'cause I find that my customer base is more, has now migrated more to Instagram. So I think it's also, for me, I recognize what I can do and what I can't do. And I am not a talker. I am not a twitterer. I'm not a, I pretty much am just using a little bit of Facebook and, and Instagram, and that's what works for me. So I, I enjoy it. It's, it's a little bit of fun, but I don't take it super seriously either, because ultimately I know that people, you know, the know, like, and trust, they, they know that I'm authentic. They know I'm direct, but I, the majority of my business is from word of mouth and referrals. So I don't, I'm not relying on that as a source of business. I just considered it almost like another,

Laura Cox Kaplan ([49:10](#)):

Yeah. Like

Carrie Peeples ([49:10](#)):

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Another website, another place that people can see what I do and figure out if they know I can trust and wanna hire me.

Laura Cox Kaplan ([49:18](#)):

Yeah. Yeah. I love that. Carrie, I've loved this conversation. I really appreciate you spending the time with me today.

Carrie Peeples ([49:25](#)):

Oh, my pleasure. This has been so fun. The time just flies by. I love talking about organizing.

EPISODE 271 CLOSE:

Laura Cox Kaplan ([49:32](#)):

Hey friend, thanks for joining me for episode 271. If she said, she said podcast, you'll find my guest today, Carrie Peoples on Instagram at neat smart N-E-A-T-S-M-A-R-T, where you should follow her because she shares great tips every single week to keep your home and your life more organized and just less chaotic. And while you're on Instagram, be sure to follow me as well. If you don't already, you'll find me at Laura Cox Kaplan and that way we can keep in touch. I'd really, really appreciate it. In the meantime, friend, have a great rest of your week and I'll talk to you again real soon. And remember she said, she said Podcast is a weekly production of She said, she said Media.